

Dedication  
of the  
First Meeting-House  
Monument  
in Old Bennington

# The Order of Service

FOR

The Dedication of the Monument in Old Bennington

Commemorating the Organization of

The First Protestant Church Within the Present Limits of Vermont

The Building of the First Meeting House in the

New Hampshire Grants and

The Beginnings of the Political Life of the State

On Sunday Morning, July Eight, 1923

AT 10 45 O'CLOCK, DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME



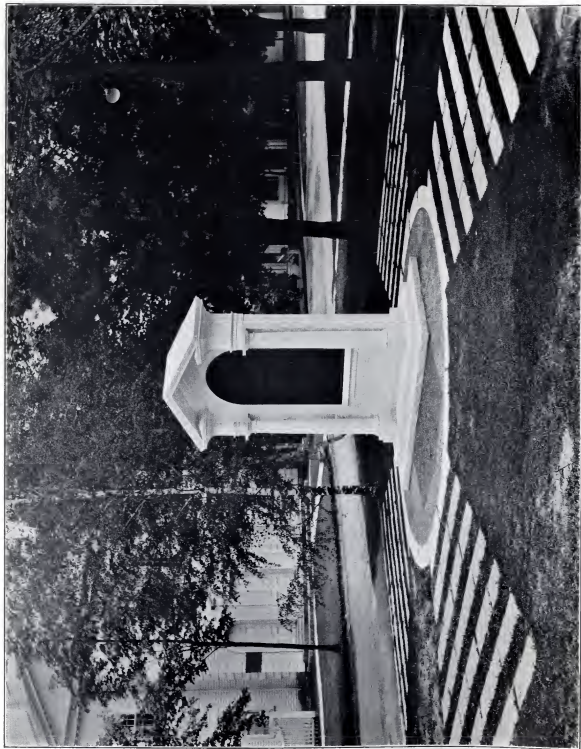
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The First, The Second and The North Congregational Churches  
of Bennington, Vermont

Including The Unabridged Text of the Addresses Delivered

Edited by Dr. Vincent Nash-Booth, Minister of the First Church



FIRST MEETING-HOUSE MONUMENT. FRONT VIEW.



FIRST MEETING-HOUSE MONUMENT. REAR VIEW.

# First Part

In the First Congregational Church of Old Bennington

The Rev. Vincent Ravi-Booth, D. D., Pastor of the First Church, Presiding.

Prelude. Andante in C ..... *E. Silas*  
Mrs. A. W. Varney, Organist

Call to Worship and Invocation. The Rev. George S. Mills, Minister of the Second  
Congregational Church of Bennington.

## THE CALL TO WORSHIP

Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion, and unto Thee shall the vow be performed.  
I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.  
Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise.  
For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations.

## THE INVOCATION.

O God, eternal and ever blessed, known to us by many names but best known to us by the name of Father, we Thy children born of Thy great earthly family, would worship and meditate in Thy presence. Grant unto us, we beseech Thee, such recognition of Thy Fatherhood as shall increase our filial trust in Thee and our fraternal interest in one another.

We rejoice that Thou didst inspire and guide our fathers in the fashioning of church and of state. Do Thou be with us as Thou wert with them. May we also be adventurers of the Spirit, with high imagination and holy faith pressing forward to a better country, seeking ever the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.

Oh, we beg of Thee, give to us now the kindling sense of Thy presence. May we realize anew Thy wisdom, Thy power, Thy goodness, Thy love. Help us to see things somewhat as Thou dost see them, to think Thy thoughts after Thee, to desire and to will with all our mind and soul and strength to be workers together with Thee in the affairs of the everlasting truth and right. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Responsive Reading. The Rev. W. G. Towart, Minister of the First Baptist Church of Bennington.

Psalm XCV.

O come, let us sing unto the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

**Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise unto Him with psalms.**

For the Lord is a great God,

**And a great King above all gods.**

In His hand are the deep places of the earth.

**The heights of the mountains are His also.**

The sea is His and He made it; and His hands formed the dry land.

**O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker:**

For He is our God,

**And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.**

Isaiah XXV.

O Lord Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name;

**For Thou hast done wonderful things, in faithfulness and truth.**

Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save: this is the Lord;

**We have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His Salvation.**

Gloria.

Scripture Lesson. The Rev. John L. Cole, Minister of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Bennington. Hebrews, XI:32-40.

"And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect."

Announcements.

In giving the announcements Dr. Ravi-Booth spoke as follows:

"It is my great privilege as pastor of the First Church to welcome the churches and ministers participating in this great and solemn service. The seating capacity of this building is six hundred and thirty. Every seat is taken. Moreover there are two hundred and twenty-five folding chairs in the vestibule and in the corners of the gallery, and many of these are in use. Your presence in such large numbers is evidence of the deep interest which this dedication has awakened in the community and in Southern Vermont."

"On the order of Service are found names representative of several denominations: Congregational, Unitarian, Baptist, Methodist Episcopal, Protestant Episcopal. This fact makes significant for some of us the words of Jesus, addressed to His Heavenly Father: 'That they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us: that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.'"

\* \* \* \* \*

"Of necessity this service must be long. The service in this building will last one hour and a half. The service on the village green will last thirty minutes. Therefore, in the interest of brevity, I must deny myself the pleasure of introducing the gentlemen who are to address us. However, their names, degrees, station, and subjects are printed on the program in your hands, by following which you will obtain all necessary information."

\* \* \* \* \*

"One more announcement. The beautiful and abundant flowers adorning the Communion table and the pulpit have been arranged by a committee appointed by this church. They are a silent and fragrant tribute to the memory of a noble citizen and Christian gentleman, Guy B. Johnson."

\* \* \* \* \*

Hymn.

O God, beneath Thy guiding hand,  
Our exiled fathers cross'd the sea;  
And when they trod the wint'ry strand,  
With pray'r and psalms they worship'd Thee.

Thou heard'st, well pleased, the song, the prayer:  
Thy blessing came; and still its power  
Shall onward, through all ages, bear  
The memory of that holy hour.

Laws, freedom, truth, and faith in God  
Came with those exiles o'er the waves;  
And where their pilgrim feet have trod,  
The God they trusted guards their graves.

And here Thy name, O God of love,  
Their children's children shall adore,  
Till these eternal hills remove,  
And spring adorns the earth no more.

Address. Professor Lewis D. Stilwell, M. A., Assistant Professor of History at Dartmouth College.

#### BENNINGTON'S PART IN VERMONT'S INDEPENDENCE\*

That first meeting-house whose site we mark today was a house of government as well as a House of God. In that "wooden, unpainted building without a steeple" (1) met those bold, shrewd pioneers who were building the foundations of Vermont as an

\*This address is carefully documented. The numbers in parenthesis refer to the documents listed at the end of this publication.





YE OLDE MEETING HOUSE, 1765-1806

independent commonwealth. Those thirty years (1761-1791) of controversy and of conflict are significant to all who care for the spirit of America and for the New England heritage. And they have, of course, a special meaning for the dwellers on this which Ethan Allen called the "Holy Hill" (2). That meeting-house was a tabernacle of frontier rebellion. It is the story of that rebellion which we now recall.

You remember that rebellion started with a fundamental question—the title to the soil. The settlers of Bennington and of the other early towns rested their rights upon a charter from the Governor of New Hampshire. These were the New Hampshire Grants. Then, out of a clear sky, came the Royal Order in Council (3) announcing that all of what we call Vermont belonged to New York, and not to New Hampshire. The Governor of New York, upon this basis, proceeded to grant the Vermont lands all over again to another set of claimants. The settlers were confronted with eviction from their homesteads, from lands which they had bought and cleared and tilled as their own. (4) The Governor of New Hampshire urged submission to New York. (5) The settlers had no friends among those in authority. But they did not submit. In law their claims were dubious, but in equity they held their rights were beyond question.

Bennington took the brunt of the protest. That same autumn the town organized a military company of sixty-five men (6)—for what purpose we can only guess. Samuel Robinson, founder of Bennington, made the long voyage to London in an attempt to change the King's decree. When Robinson's efforts had proved a failure in practice, (7) and the test law suits at Albany had gone against the settlers, it was in Bennington—presumably in the old meeting-house—that a convention of the people met (1770) and determined to resist by force "the usurpation and unjust claims of the Governor and Council of New York." (8)

The first test came with the appearance of Sheriff Ten Eyck of Albany and a *posse* of three hundred men to eject James Breakenridge from his farm in the south part of Bennington. The men of Bennington were forewarned and lay in two parties



ambushed in such a way as to command with cross-fire the approach to the farm. Into that trap the sheriff marched his men—and then found that neither arguments nor threats would persuade the settlers to surrender or his own men to fight. The sheriff's posse melted away without a shot. That bloodless skirmish was the first assertion of Vermont's *de facto* independence. It was the Lexington of the Green Mountains.

From then on there was all but war between New York and the New Hampshire Grants. A military association was formed (1771) with Ethan Allen, commandant and Seth Warner, Remember Baker and Robert Cochrane—all Bennington men—among the captains. Warner's company on New Year's 1772 "continued all day in military exercise and firing at marks" (9) in the mid-winter fields of Bennington. At a convention in Bennington that April (1772) it was resolved to resist if necessary the King's troops which were thought at that time to be proceeding against them. (10) Had the red coats come, it seems quite probable that the Vermonters would have started war not only with New York but with Great Britain.

There were many incidents in those years of armed controversy in the Vermont forest. Most of them were bloodless for the single reason that the "Yorkers" ran away. There were no half-measures on the Vermont side. Even the first pastor of this church, Rev. Jedediah Dewey, was involved in the controversy, and was indicted as a rioter in a New York Court. (11) Mr. Hugh Monroe, a New York land surveyor, for instance, was flogged on the naked back by the Green Mountain Boys until he fainted; then flogged a second time until he fainted; and flogged a third time till he fainted; then banished from the Grants. (12)

One sees the spirit of the times in that proclamation issued at Bennington in 1774 by Ethan Allen and six others who had been condemned to death, if they were caught, by the New York Legislature. The proclamation announces to the "Magistrates, Sheriffs, Coroners and Constables" of the New York Counties of Albany and Charlotte that the undersigned propose to shoot them dead, and declares that "The Emblems of insatiable, avaricious, overbearing, inhuman, barbarous and blood-guiltiness of disposition and Intentions is therein portraited in that transparent Image of themselves which cannot fail to be a blot, and an infamous reproach to them and their posterity." (13)

By 1775, then, the people of Vermont had already developed a military organization, the rudiments of an independent government, and a fierce war psychology. They alone among the Continental colonies were materially and spiritually prepared for the war for Independence which broke upon them.

It is not surprising, then, that the first aggressive move in the Revolution originated here in Bennington. The capture of Ticonderoga was planned by a gathering of "the principal officers of the Green Mountain Boys, and other principal inhabitants" in this town soon after the news of Lexington. (14) In this town, too, was the rendezvous for the expedition (15), and from Bennington came the commander, two captains of the force and a good share of the officers and men. (16) The fall of Ticonderoga, no matter how Ethan Allen may have used the Great Jehovah to assist him in the enterprise, was a brilliant exploit, and the success was due to the intrepidity of what the New York Governor called "the Bennington Mob". (17) The Green Mountain Boys were passing with hardly an effort from a rebellion against New York to a revolution against Great Britain.

The next year (1776) when the British in turn besieged Ticonderoga it was to Bennington that an urgent call for aid was sent. The militia of the town were already on the way, but the people, despite the fact that all their able-bodied men were in the field, gathered 1000 bushels of wheat within a day for the relief of the garrison.(18) There were very few Tories in Bennington.

There is, of course, no point in describing to this audience the Battle of Bennington itself. You know the part that Bennington men played in the victory, and its importance in the ultimate defeat of Burgoyne. One glimpses the spirit of Vermont that summer in the speech which Thomas Chittenden made to the Council of Safety at Sunderland some weeks before the battle—"The men must be enlisted, a full regiment, and armed ready for the field, and fed and paid. We will put that proposition behind us. It is open to discussion ---- I don't know how we are going to get it (the means) but my wife has a string of gold beads and I have ten head of fat cattle. We will begin with the beads and the cattle, and trust the Lord to show us what then to do." (19) The Council of Safety moved to Bennington soon afterward, and sat in the Catamount Tavern through the battle and until Burgoyne surrendered. (20)

We know little of the part that the first meeting-house performed in the actual hostilities of the Revolution except for the impossible task of housing 700 Hessian prisoners after Bennington Battle. (21) But the men who worshipped in that meeting-house were not only at Ticonderoga and at Bennington, but with St. Clair at Mount Independence, with Arnold at Quebec and in Seth Warner's regiment of Continentals that served throughout the war—proving the truth of Burgoyne's description of them as "the most active and rebellious race on the continent." (22)

Meantime, of course, that same active and rebellious spirit was breaking out in the formation of an independent republic of Vermont. The Declaration of Independence at Westminster January 15, 1777, was followed by the adoption of the Constitution at Windsor in July (1777). That Constitution was a hurried wartime document, prepared under the stress of a threatened invasion, and without any reference of its provisions to a vote of the people. It is to the credit of Bennington, I think, that it "was the only town that objected against the Constitution, for the want of a popular ratification of it." (23)

During the thirteen years of Vermont's independence the legislature of this state met eight times in the Bennington meeting-house (24). At the second of these sessions the formal ratification of the Constitution was performed. (25) In those early days of wandering legislatures, the spot we mark came as near as any to being the capital of Vermont.

The measures taken by the new government were in full accord with the earlier spirit of Bennington and the Green Mountain Boys. The continuing hostility of New York prevented the participation of Vermont with the thirteen other states in the Continental Congress. New Hampshire revived her former claim to the Vermont lands, while New York persisted in her assertions of sovereignty. Congress neglected Vermont's military needs, and after Burgoyne's surrender left the northern border unprotected against the British. The infant republic found itself with neighbors to the east and west which threatened to absorb her, an army to the north which threatened to invade her, and a Congress whose cause she had espoused, refusing to recognize her. And in that tight predicament the Vermont government boldly and almost merrily worked out its own salvation.



THE CATAMOUNT TAVERN MONUMENT,  
WHERE SAT THE COMMITTEE OF SAFETY.

It defied the prohibition of Congress by making grants of the remaining lands in the state on its own authority; (26) adding, thus, a multitude of grantees to those who were interested in the success of the new government.

It counteracted the claims of New York and of New Hampshire by annexing with their consent (1780) thirty-five towns in New Hampshire and twelve districts in New York. (27) No more vigorous notice could have been given that Vermont was and would be an independent state. But the boldest, shrewdest move was the secret truce with the British in 1780. Ostensibly a mere cartel for the exchange of prisoners, it was in reality a cessation of hostilities lasting until the end of the war. The British were led into the false hope that, if Vermont were treated leniently she might return to allegiance to King George. (28) The Vermont militia went home, and the war, so far as Vermont was concerned, was practically over a year before Yorktown. In one more way the new government thus gave evidence that it was amply able to care for itself. It was in the Bennington meeting-house that the legislature in June, 1781, received the delegates from the New York and New Hampshire towns and listened to Ira Allen's explanation of the British truce. (29) That session, as I see it, marked the certainty of the ultimate success of the long struggle for the freedom of Vermont.

Four times more the legislature met in the old meeting-house, dissolving the union with the New York and New Hampshire towns (1782), establishing post-offices (1784), adopting the common law of England (1787) and in general providing for the needs of an independent nation. There was little desire for a time to belong to the United States, weak and tax-ridden as the former colonies were after the strain of a seven years' war. (30) Vermont bided her time and prospered.

It was only when the framing of the new Constitution gave assurance of a solid future for the Union; and when at the same time New York grew anxious to have Vermont's assistance in keeping the seat of government in New York City (31), that the ancient controversies were closed, and Vermont prepared to enter the Union. And again in the old meeting-house, January 10, 1791, gathered the special convention, one delegate from every town, to adopt by almost unanimous vote the Constitution of the United States. Vermont's liberty was at last secure, when she became the fourteenth original state.

The history of North America abounds in stories such as this one of Old Bennington,—records of brave and canny stubbornness on the part of a whole people. Yet there are few communities who have undergone so long a test of hardihood and persistence. It was thirty years from the founding of Bennington to the admission of Vermont to the United States. And during all that time they were a little people. Bennington in those days had less than 2500 souls. (32) The whole state contained at the end of the Revolution (1781) only about 7000 men capable of bearing arms. (33) And what is more remarkable this little people in their long struggle won completely. In the end they got exactly what they wanted. Bennington and Vermont were a proved success.

One wonders what lay behind it all. What forces made that people "the most active and rebellious race on the continent?" There are many guesses of course, I offer only three.

For one thing they believed in Vermont. They were utterly optimistic and full of faith. Vermont was their Promised Land. Its lands were virgin fertile; (34) its hills were crowded with sound, hard timber; its streams abounded in cascades waiting to turn mill wheels; there were minerals, waterways, fish and game—everything. "Vermont," said Ira Allen, "contains almost everything within itself that can contribute to

the immediate wants, convenience, and even luxury of man." (35) They were even cheerful about the long, hard winters. There was a belief that the climate was growing milder every year; (36) and that the deep snows served to increase the fertility of the soil. (37) To those young men from Connecticut, Vermont was the land of Manifest Destiny. (38) It was their faith that made them fight.

In addition they were habitual fighters in their daily lives. I mean that life on this hill in those days was a straight struggle against a steady pressure of handicaps and hardships. Those words have too weak a meaning for us. But if you will contemplate the task of simply chopping down one acre of trees—many of them two feet through—and then dig up the stumps of those trees and burn those trees and stumps and pull out all the boulders from those fields, and somehow plow with a wooden plough, the tangle of roots and rocks that remained—realizing all the while that an acre is hardly the beginning of a self-supporting farm—it will be clear that our forefathers had more iron in their muscles than we have in our bones. The stone walls of Vermont are the real monument to the men who fought at Bennington.

Add to the hardships of clearing the soil—the building of houses without nails, the carrying crops to market without wagons and almost without roads, and the survival through perishing winters without stoves—and remember that smallpox, dysentery, influenza and typhus were almost household companions of the pioneers (39)—and one begins to wonder whether a mere political controversy or even a battle was not pretty much of a holiday from the fiercer battle of daily living. "Cold and heat," to quote one traveller among them, (40) "snow and rain, labour and fatigue, are regarded by them as trifles, deserving no attention. The coarsest food is pleasant to them; and the hardest bed refreshing." Such a people were in the nature of the case almost unbeatable.

And lastly, they were the heirs and champions of the institution of freedom. They brought with them the New England heritage—the Congregational church, the common school and the town meeting. One of the early votes of the proprietors of Bennington (May 9, 1763) to tax six dollars on every right of land to build a meeting-house and a schoolhouse (41) shows the stubbornness of their purpose. Six dollars was a mint of money in those days. They really believed in these things. There were no town-meetings under the government of New York, and no common schools and almost no Congregational churches. Nor did the British Empire in those days support or symbolize any of these things. Behind the struggle for free lands lay the love for a free church, a free school and a free government. That, I think, is the meaning of the meeting-house, and the heritage of Bennington.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hymn.

O God of Bethel, by whose hand  
Thy people still are fed;  
Who thro' this weary pilgrimage  
Hast all our fathers led.

Our vows, our prayers, we now present  
Before Thy throne of grace:  
God of our fathers, be the God  
Of their succeeding race.

O spread Thy sheltering wings around,  
Till all our wandering cease,  
And at our Father's loved abode  
Our souls arrive in peace!

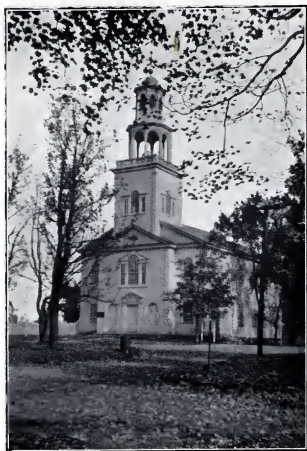
Address. The Rev. W. W. Fenn, Professor of Theology, Harvard University.

## THE PILGRIM FATHERS OF BENNINGTON

This, the First Church of Christ in Bennington, and the first Protestant Church in Vermont, was formed on Dec. 3, 1762, by the union of two Separate churches from the towns of Hardwick and Sunderland in Massachusetts. To it were added on the day of organization, members from a similar church in Newint, sometimes called Lisbon, a part of Norwich, Connecticut, and shortly afterwards others from a Separate church in Westfield, Massachusetts. The largest number came from Hardwick and their presence here is easy to explain. The Captain Samuel Robinson who returning from a campaign in the French and Indian war had wandered into this pleasant valley and finding it good, a "Promised land" in very truth, had taken the lead in a company formed to purchase it from the original New Hampshire grantees, was also a deacon in the Separate church of Hardwick and it was only natural that he should bring with him to this new home the friends with whom he had intimate religious associations. It is also clear why Separates from Sunderland were here. During the fifties of the 18th century, Pratts and Harwoods had moved from Hardwick to Sunderland, or Amherst its adjoining town, where there was already a group of Separates. In 1755 Betty Pratt of Hardwick had married Elisha Field of Sunderland. Thus there were ties between the two churches which when members from Hardwick removed drew along with them their kinsfolk from Sunderland. How was it with the company from Newint—were there family as well as religious reasons why they too emigrated to Bennington? Possibly there were, but investigation has so far failed to disclose them. At any rate, they also were Separates and perhaps the religious connection alone was sufficient.

From the records of this church it appears that the settlers from Hardwick and Sunderland came here not merely as individuals and families, but also as already organized churches with their respective records which were entrusted to the care of John Fassett who was also appointed clerk of the united church. Are these records, or any portion of them, still extant? Dr. Jennings in his indispensable "Memorials" describes a torn folio sheet containing a church covenant and some fifty signatures, but it remained for Mr. Lucius R. Paige, historian of the town of Hardwick, to discern its full significance. Unhappily, the sheet seems to have disappeared temporarily from the archives so that I have been unable to verify his statements of fact concerning it, but if they are correct his conclusion seems certain that this precious relic was a sheet of the Hardwick records—its covenant was the original covenant of the Hardwick Separates, which, with two exceptions to the Cambridge Platform, was adopted here, and its first thirty five signatures arranged in parallel columns, those on the left of men and those on the right of women, are, at least in the case of the men, autographs of the Hardwick Church founders, some of whom never removed to Bennington at all. To this covenant with its original signatures were afterwards appended the names of those admitted to the Bennington church from Sunderland and Newint as well as a few names of others subsequently received into membership. This sacred torn folio sheet, then, represents all that has survived of the Hardwick records. So far as appears not even a fragment of the Sunderland records has been preserved.

Among the treasures of this church, however, is a little book in which are bound together fourteen well mounted folio sheets, besides a few fragments, which upon examination turn out to be a portion of the records of the Separate church at Newint. Since the last entry is in 1766, it is evident that these records were not here when the Bennington Church was organized. Nor did the church, as a church, remove to Ben-



SECOND MEETING-HOUSE, DEDICATED JANUARY 1, 1806.



nington for it seems to have dragged on in Newint until about 1770 when after some defections to the Universalists its few surviving members returned to the Congregational church from which they had separated some twenty-five years before. Who brought these scraps of their records to Bennington? We have no answer or even a clue to an answer. Yet here they are, and one reads the pathetic pages to-day with a fresh and lively understanding of what manner of men, and women, the Separates were.

So far I have spoken freely of Separates and Separate churches as if the term were so well understood as to need no explanation. Unhappily, however, such is not the case for significant as the movement called Separatism was in the religious life of New England, it has received almost no attention from our historians, even from such as have been interested in the religious aspects of their subject. Therefore the rest of my time this morning must be given first to explaining who the Separates were and how they arose, and secondly to suggesting how under the wise and tolerant guidance of its first minister, Jedidiah Dewey, this church anticipated the course of a large number of the churches with which it was most nearly associated by returning to the regular Congregational fellowship which once it had conscientiously forsaken. For lack of time many interesting and enlivening details must be passed over in silence, all of which, however, may be found in the entertaining papers of Dr. Jennings who, in preparing his "Memorials," was happily unmindful of the Old Testament precept, but reaped his field so scrupulously, corners and all, as to leave practically nothing to reward the labor of a gleaner who follows him.

Who, then, were the Separates, and what is their place in the religious history of New England? From one point of view they were the radicals, from another, and that their own, they were the conservatives of their time. In abolition days, of which we are reminded by the Garrison monument standing a little way south of the memorial which we are dedicating today, Wendell Phillips used to say—We are called radicals, but, in fact, we are the true conservatives because we stand for the ancient principles of the fathers from which our critics have radically departed. So the Separates, although dubbed by their opponents New Lights and regarded as extreme champions, in practice, of the New Divinity, claimed to be maintaining the principles of the first New England churches as set forth in the Cambridge Platform and hence to be Simon-pure, honest-to-God, conservatives, "Strict Congregationalists," as they preferred to call themselves, in the face of an unwittingly radical and hence miscalled Standing Order. To understand the Separates and this paradox about them, we must sketch with utmost brevity their historical background and the circumstances of their origin.

The first company which effected a permanent settlement in New England had as its living nucleus a band of Pilgrims who had fled from England to Holland whence they came to the bleak and dreary shores of Plymouth. They, too, were Separatists and it is in order to distinguish them from those of the 18th century that the latter are usually called Separates, although the discrimination is more convenient than just since the latter frequently referred to themselves as Separatists and, indeed, the principles of the two companies were substantially the same. Both held to the independence of the local church from all outside control whether civil or ecclesiastical. But this external independence of the particular Church was due to its complete and absolute inward dependence upon Christ its living Head whose spirit animated every member and the Church as a whole. Accordingly none could be, rightfully, members of the Church except such as had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. That the church should be a pure church, consisting only of visible saints, that is of the regenerate elect, was a



THE GARRISON MARKER

cardinal principle of the early N. E. churches of both Puritan and Pilgrim stock. Nevertheless, there was just at this point a grave inconsistency, for they included the children of church members as themselves also members of the church and hence proper subjects of baptism. Yet these children were plainly not regenerate, nor was it at all certain that they were of the elect, accordingly they stood in an anomalous relation to the church. Although members and hence eligible for baptism they were not admitted to the other sacrament of the church, the Lord's Supper. In other words, they were not in full communion with the church, but were half-way members so to speak. Now when these half-way members grew up, married, and had children of their own, the question arose whether these children of the next generation were entitled to baptism as members of the church; that is, did the half-way membership of the parents suffice to constitute their children members of the church with a right to baptism? This proved an exceedingly vexatious question for, on the one hand, it set in stronger light the original inconsistency, and so strengthened the position of the more logically consistent Baptists, and, on the other, it was highly desirable that, to borrow our common phrase, the church could not lose this hold upon its young people. After long and animated discussion, it was declared by the Synod of 1662, that half-way members publicly owning the covenant of the church might present their children for baptism, although the Lord's Supper was still denied to both parents and children until by regeneration they should be qualified for full communion. This, however, opened a door of danger for, in some churches, the privilege was promptly extended to children for whom any church member would stand sponsor. Thus the original theory of baptism as a sign and seal of birthright membership was almost insensibly changed to that of church membership acquired by baptism. Moreover, there were some, Solomon Stoddard of Northampton, for example, who with more or less clearness, held to the Lord's Supper as a means of grace and hence admitted to it all half-way members, and even urged their attendance. This, naturally, was accompanied by a tendency to minimize the necessity of regeneration and to substitute moral virtues and the outward performance of conventional religious duties as sufficient to ensure salvation, or at least as means of grace conducive to regeneration.

Against these tendencies, collectively and loosely called Arminianism, Jonathan Edwards, grandson of Solomon Stoddard and also first his associate and then his successor in the church at Northampton, hurled his mighty protest. For salvation, so he taught, regeneration alone availed and only the regenerate were to be admitted to the Lord's Supper while their immediate offspring alone could be baptized. His insistence upon regeneration fell in with the Great Awakening under Whitefield and his followers, which indeed it locally anticipated. Many clergymen of the Standing Order, commonly called Congregational in Massachusetts, and Presbyterian in Connecticut, refused to join in the revival deprecating the greivous disorders which accompanied it and conscientiously devoted to the well established ways of religious thought and practice. As might be expected, a similar division arose among lay members of the churches, some of whom sympathized with the revival while others emphatically did not. Of course the former laid stress upon regeneration by an immediate act of the Holy Spirit and depreciated correspondingly the efficacy of means of grace. Such persons, in their element when revival enthusiasm was aglow, felt their ardor chilled by the conventionalities of an unawaken church, and moreover were often forced to hear snoring diatribes from the pulpit against what they passionately believed to be living truth and holy exercises. Accordingly, it was but natural that they should hold both ministers and church members who opposed "the work" to be unregenerate persons, and they

also professed themselves able to distinguish between regenerate and unregenerate by a sure and inward sign of spiritual responsiveness. Those whom they thus condemned resented the disparagement. The minister fulminated against these "censorious Pharisees" publicly from the pulpit, and, between services, their neighbors nagged them privately in the "Sabbaday house" in winter and under the horse-sheds in summer, until finally they quit going to church altogether. It has recently been argued that the English Separatists exaggerated the "persecutions" to which they were subjected, being unduly sensitive to the chaffing of their neighbors. It may be so. When a man has corns on his conscience his neighbors must tread gingerly and walk warily not to give pain and offence. It may likewise be true that the N. E. Separates made too much of the horse-play of their townsfolk and the ponderous scorn of the village parson. A countryman dislikes almost more than anything else to be made to appear ridiculous. In the midst of the frightful tragedy of the war, with its devastated villages, myriads of dead and dying, and the ever present sense of a collapsing civilization, a dear old lady, dyed in the wool Vermonter, remarked to me that it all seemed to her "perfectly ridiculous." To her mind nothing could be worse for an individual or a world than to be ridiculous. There seem to be some men in the world who would prefer a martyr's death to being "sass'd" or laughed at. Even a Hebrew prophet took his baldness so hard that he delivered unto two she-bears for the destruction of the flesh a crowd of children who twitted him about it. So we may reasonably suppose that these Separates having little sense of humor, else perhaps they would not have been Separates, took too seriously the slights and slurs of their neighbors; nevertheless, it must have been trying to go to church and not get a crumb of the bread of life, while to go and have the chaff of contempt thrust down their throats must have been unendurable. So they stayed away. But they would not forsake the assembling of themselves together in barns and in private houses for mutual edification and encouragement. Sometimes they would be visited by a travelling preacher of their own sort; occasionally one of their own number displayed such gifts of public speech as to become a regular preacher to the group, and soon to other like-minded companies. Thus by degrees these "come-outers" organized themselves into churches, ordained ministers, put up meeting-houses and held regular services for public worship. By this time however, they had clashed with the civil authorities. In Connecticut a law was passed against itinerant preachers at that time, too. The minister of the Congregational church in any town was elected by the concurrent vote of church and town, and all inhabitants of the town were taxed for his support. It seemed unjust for friends of the revival excluded from the town church sometimes merely by their own convictions but occasionally also by formal excommunication to be required to pay for the support of a minister who despised them openly and whom they deemed no true minister of Christ, and, if they refused, to be dis-trained of their humble possessions. At first friends of the revival, and believers in regeneration as the only divine beginning of Christian life, they became by the logic of events, "come-outers," "Separates," and, finally, actively hostile to the established church, and the state which presumed to interfere in matters religious. In all this they were but following in the steps of their Plymouth forbears the seventeenth century Separatists. They were entirely right in their claim that they were upholding the principles of the early churches of New England. They *were* the conservatives walking in the old ways from which the regular churches had been led astray by the seductive influences of the Half-way Covenant. And as the Separatists of the 17th century fled to a land where there was no established church and no organized state to trouble them, so some of the 18th century Separates came up here unto an unnamed

wilderness where they were at once the church and the state and could organize both pretty much as they chose. The parallel is remarkably perfect. Across the generations, the Separatists of Plymouth clasp hands with the Pilgrim Fathers of Bennington.

Now, let it be confessed frankly that neither Separates nor Separatists, as a class, impress favorably a modern reader. They may have been the salt of the earth, but

Salt of the earth! In what queer guise  
You are sometimes found to crystallize.

There is still extant a pitiable little book in which are described the shabby bickerings of a small company of English Separatists who had fled from London to Amsterdam. We read of acrimonious squabbles in the exiled church over the apparel of the pastor's wife, her ruffles and topish hat and a most objectionable cod-piece fashion in the breast of her dress, and as we read disgust deepens at the paltriness and cantankerousness of these Separatists. Similarly, one reads of the excesses of the Great Awakening, the carryings on of Davenport at New London and even some of the scenes enacted at Northampton, until his heart grows sick within him at the reflection that this crazy fanaticism once passed for religion pure and undefiled. Edwards himself was horrified by the extravagancies which he witnessed and of which he heard: his logical mind, delicately sensitive religious nature and inbred sense of clerical decorum, were outraged and besides he could not approve of the separations which friends of the revival made from local churches. These Separates as a class were ignorant, bigoted, pudgicky and fanatical, or to put it in shorter words, they were "sot" and "cranky," apt to mistake the heat engendered by wheels whirling in their own heads for spiritual fervor, and every passing puff of whimsy for the trade winds of the Eternal, praying and exhorting with high pitched sing-song voices in bombastic language which often burst into pathos. To illustrate, let me read you a letter written by a Separatist church in Charlestown, Massachusetts, inviting the aid of a council in the selection of a pastor.

April 26, 1752. Dear Brethren, we are wading through many tribulations towards the blissful shores of eternal day where we shant stand in need of councils to enlighten and direct us into the true worship and discipline in the House of God. Neither shall we stand in need of your witness to direct us in the choice of a Pastor. But O, dear brethren, we are in the militant state and stand in need of your help in all these. Therefore we cry to our God and to you his witnesses: Help, help, help. . . . the battle goes hard on the side of the faithful: therefore again we cry, Gird on your sword, Mount the White Horses, and come forth to the help of the Lord against the Mighty; and as you hear the Trumpet sound on this part of Zion's Walls, the certain sound is, viz. We have been in search of a Pastor till many of us is lost in the Wilderness; for our evidences cross each other, some for James Simon and some for Saml. Niles. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

Is it any wonder that persons who could write so in the "Ercles vein" were made fun of by the learned clergy and the better balanced neighbors?

But you will remind me that it was Separatists who settled Plymouth and Separates who settled Bennington, no mean achievements and certainly far beyond the powers of persons such as I have been describing. Quite so, and, in each case, it was men and women of a much less extreme sort than most of their fellows who did the notable deed. Moreover, what John Robinson and William Brewster were to the Pilgrims of Plymouth, that Jedidiah Dewey and Samuel Robinson were to the Pilgrims of Bennington. And this brings me to my second point viz: the way in which under

the judicious leadership of Jedidiah Dewey this church anticipated the proper development of the Separate movement by casting off its Separate peculiarities and becoming a truly catholic church of Christ in this place.

At the outset, mention was made of a Separate church in Westfield, Massachusetts, from which recruits came to the united church of Bennington. The actual relation between this church in Westfield and the church here is obscure. On August 14, 1763, representatives of this church met with the church in Westfield before a Separate council and, in accordance with its advice, it was agreed that the two churches should unite and become one church under the pastoral care of the Rev. Jedidiah Dewey of Westfield. Did then the Westfield church as an organization remove to Bennington and merge its identity into the church here as the churches of Hardwick and Sunderland had done? Such appears to have been the intention which however was not realized. Not only is there no hint in the Bennington records of the coming hither of the Westfield church, but also of the individual accessions to this church for the next year and a half, only six in all, not one bears a name which has been identified with Westfield. There seems to be no way of telling how many Westfield Separates came here, but whether there were few or many matters little since the sufficient contribution of Westfield to Bennington was the Rev. Jedidiah Dewey and his wife.

This Jedidiah Dewey whose name will be remembered and honored so long as Bennington lasts, was born in Westfield in 1714 of typical Puritan stock from which descended also Dr. Orville Dewey, a distinguished Unitarian clergyman of the last century, and Admiral George Dewey of Manila fame. Our Jedidiah, the third in succession to bear the Christian name, united with his home church in Westfield in 1738, left it in 1748, was cut off in 1750 and ordained pastor of the Westfield Separates in 1754, came to Bennington as minister of this church in 1763 and died here in 1778. He was not a college man, and for that matter, apparently no Separate minister was, for this people cherished a strong delusion that "the Lord eddicates his own preachers," but in addition to the boldness and breadth of genuine religion, he had good horse sense (Morgan horse sense) which a college cannot give although it does sometimes seem competent to take it away. "To know what's what" is rather more useful to one's self and the community than academic ability to divine the ontological so-ness of the empirical as-it-were. Himself a carpenter, and a good one too, apt to supervise the raising of the meeting house and to build for himself a dwelling the structure of which is still sound as all may see, he early entered the school of his great fellow-craftsman, the carpenter of Nazareth in which he made notable progress. It was amazingly fortunate that such a man came here as pastor of this church, for both the civil and the religious situation as it developed soon called for just those traits of character with which he was peculiarly endowed precisely as, if I may return to the comparison which is constantly in the background of our minds, precisely as the conditions at Plymouth, especially after the arrival of the Puritans at Salem and Boston, brought out in the 17 century Separatist virtues exemplified and inculcated by John Robinson and William Brewster. Separate settlers were not long to have this fertile region to themselves alone, and it very soon became a living issue how this church would deal with these new comers who were Christians but not Separates. Would it repel them by narrow exclusiveness or welcome them with Christian hospitality? It was exactly the question which confronted Plymouth when the Puritans became their neighbors and the Pilgrim Fathers of Bennington answered it after the fashion of their precursors, thanks to the spirit of Pastor John Robinson in the one case and the presence of Rev. Jedidiah Dewey in the other. To quote the words of David Avery; "As a number of

professors not of the Separate order have become inhabitants of the town and have great respect for the personal and ministerial qualifications of the Rev. Jedidiah Dewey who was of catholic and liberal principles, they have at different periods joined the communion here." As the community grew, the Church of Christ in this place, losing its Separate acridity and bigotry under the broadening and sweetening influences of Pastor Dewey's "catholic and liberal" principles received the new comers into its fellowship and so became in truth as well as in name the church of Christ in Bennington. This was not accomplished in a day for some of the early members were tenacious of their Separate principles and complained of departures from them, but the progress was steadily in the right direction and at last this church founded by Separates took its place among the regular Congregational churches of New England.

In this it anticipated the rightful development of the Separate movement in general. Beginning as an organized party about 1744, it spread with extraordinary rapidity, but in 1796, Isaac Backus, a friendly historian reports that not one church was left in Massachusetts and but few in Connecticut. Its period of greatest strength was just before the outbreak of the Revolution which gave a new turn to the attention of men. Moreover, the protest of the Separates against taxation for religious purposes had borne fruit and most of the old abuses had ceased. In addition, the regular Congregational churches had gradually come round to pretty nearly the Separate position with regard to regeneration and church membership. As the situation developed, many Separates following the strict logic of their protest became Baptists, a few became Universalists and Shakers, but for the most part their churches either petered out into nothingness or returned to the Congregational fellowship. Why should they not, since the essential principles for which the Separates stood were largely adopted by the churches of the Standing Order—the Half-Way Covenant passed into "innocuous desuetude," and the necessity of regeneration as qualification for church membership was revived in Congregationalism as a whole? The work of the Separates was done, their course was run, but it was this Separate Church in Bennington which under the sane and Godly guidance of Jedidiah Dewey anticipated the normal course of development.

If you would see a highly significant evidence of this man's character, read the inscriptions upon his grave stone in yonder yard with its quotations from Shakespeare's King Richard II. How many country clergymen were there in New England in 1778 so familiar with Shakespeare, and so bold as to direct that lines from one of his plays should be carved upon their tomb-stone? And be it remembered that he owed nothing to college culture, but was almost wholly self educated. Yet no man in this community was more influential than he, the Governor of New York being witness. If one were recounting the notable achievements of Bennington and Vermont, it would not have been Jedidiah Dewey's way to rise as Ethan Allen, his doughty companion in arms, once did, and say "Please remind the Lord that I was there," but we may be allowed to say it for him. Admiral George Dewey did great things in Manila Bay, but it may be doubted whether his more spectacular exploit was in reality any more memorable and useful to mankind, than the work of his obscure kinsman Parson Jedidiah Dewey who labored here through fifteen years of toil and trouble to build a church which has taught and inspired many generations of Christian men and women who have done justly and loved mercy and walked humbly with their God. Who can estimate the enlarging influence of this church through the one hundred and sixty years of its history? Its members have gone out through all the earth and their words unto the end of the world with results which omniscience alone can measure and eternity alone reveal.



With reverent gratitude we pay homage this day to the Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers of Bennington, and particularly to the generous spirit and stout heart of Jedidiah Dewey, their first pastor, remembering the ancient promise—

“They that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”

\* \* \* \* \*

Prayer of Dedication. The Rev. Dr. S. DeLancey Townsend, Rector All Angels' Church, New York City.

### DEDICATION PRAYER

O Thou Almighty and Everliving God, we come before Thee on this day, so revered and set apart for the recollection of our relations to Thee, with hearts overflowing with reverence and gratitude.

We thank Thee not only for the revelation of Thyself as seen in the grandeur and majesty of these mighty hills, the exuberant verdure of their upland forests, the exquisite beauty of varying line and colour in these fertile fields already ripening to their harvest; but, most of all, do we thank Thee for that wonderful revelation of Thyself, Thy character and purposes, unfolded in the lives of the noble dead whom we bear in mind on this occasion.

It is good for us to be here upon this hill of vision, and to hold communion with that great cloud of witnesses with which we are encompassed, those souls who have made it memorable; those souls whose true proportions and whose incomparable worth are made increasingly manifest with the passing of the years.

As we listen to the recital of the amazing events and achievements which have called for this commemoration we rejoice and give thanks for the great part which the churches, their pastors and congregations, have taken in the establishment and development of this Commonwealth. With what gracious persuasiveness are we drawn to perceive that to truly believe in God is to believe in man; and that to truly believe in man is to believe in God: that nothing great, nothing noble, nothing splendid is wrought in the affairs of this world save as it is wrought by Thee through the plain men and women of the time. Only through their belief in Thee as a God of Righteousness, expecting Righteousness from all Thy children were our fathers able to endure and to achieve!

Therefore, we place here A Stone of Remembrance which we ask Thee to take under Thy gracious protection, beseeching Thee to give it a voice to this and all succeeding generations.

Placed and centered as it is upon this great cross of stepping stones—reaching out its all comprehending arms to the four quarters of the earth—may it proclaim to every passer-by the significant fact that both God and man derive their true value, not from power or possessions, not even from purposes and ideals, but from the *expression* which they give to that power, those possessions, purposes and ideals, the service which they render. Let it give eternal emphasis to the truth that life is sacred, because it is sacramental and sacrificial.

As this shrine records the deeds of men who endured and wrought not for themselves, nor for their families, nor for their homes only, but for generations unborn: men who believed in a better land and in a finer polity and a nobler manhood, and died in this unconquerable conviction, striving to make their dream come true: believing

in a promised land even though they might not enter in and enjoy it (many a promising youth giving his precious tomorrow for our today) therefore may the beholder bow in prayer, asking to be delivered from a purposeless, thankless, unserviceable and undedicated life. May we so thrill with the contagion of their generous and triumphant spirit that, in us, they may behold the travail of their soul and be satisfied. Grant that we may prove ourselves to be their sons as well as their heirs!

And now, O tender Father of us all, give to each one of us here the courage which comes of seeing his daily doing against the magnificent background of Immortality; and so revive among us once again the simple grace and homely virtue of neighbourliness, that neighbourliness which is the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee; that neighbourliness out of which grew all that was greatest and finest in the men and women who wrought in this place; that neighbourliness which was the outstanding distinction of the daily doing of Jesus Christ, Thy perfect Son, Our Lord. Amen.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### Processional Hymn:

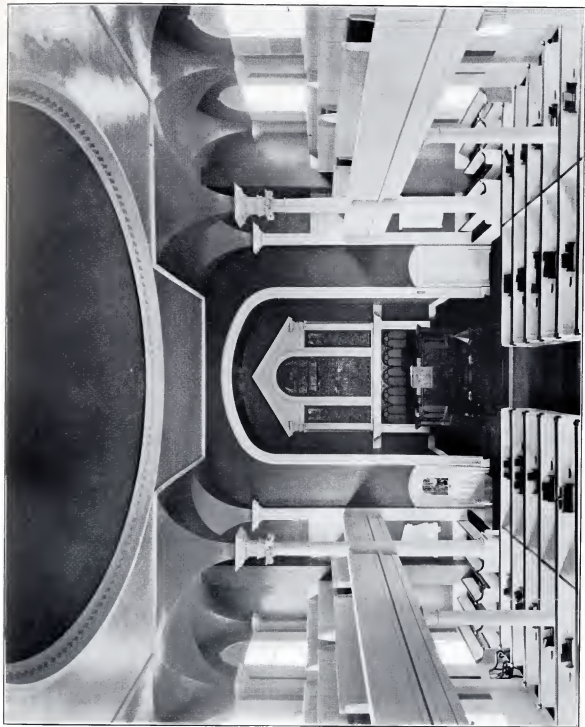
O beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountain majesties,  
Above the fruited plain;  
America! America!  
God shed his grace on thee,  
And crown Thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,  
Whose stern, impassioned stress  
A thoroughfare for freedom beat  
Across the wilderness;  
America! America!  
God mend thine every flaw,  
Confirm thy soul in self control,  
Thy liberty in law.

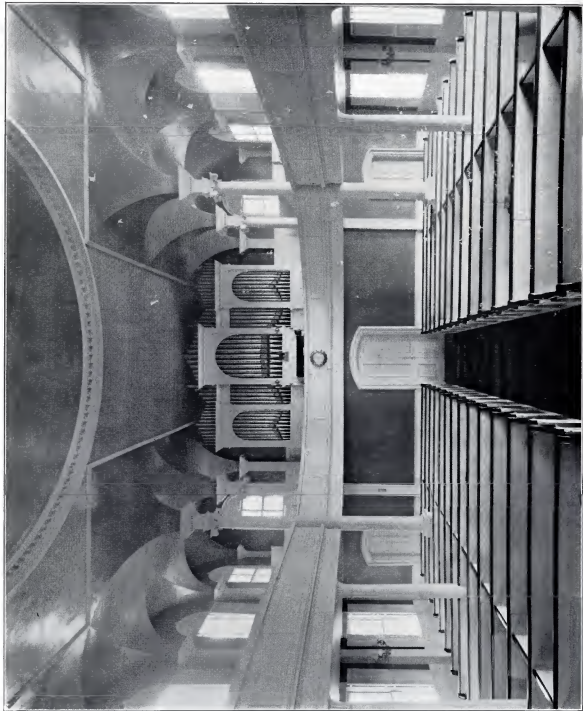
O beautiful for glory-tale  
Of liberating strife,  
When valiantly, for man's avail,  
Men lavished precious life;  
America! America!  
May God thy gold refine,  
Till all success be nobleness,  
And every gain divine.

O beautiful for patriot dream  
That sees beyond the years,  
Thine alabaster cities gleam,  
Undimmed by human tears;  
America! America!  
God shed His grace on thee,  
And crown thy good with brotherhood,  
From sea to shining sea.

(During the singing of "America, The Beautiful," the congregation passed in procession from the church to the village green for the unveiling of the monument.)



INTERIOR OF SECOND MEETING-HOUSE



INTERIOR OF SECOND MEETING-HOUSE AS SEEN FROM PULPIT

## ON THE VILLAGE GREEN

(Over a thousand people formed a square with the monument in the center. The eight persons taking part in the exercises mounted a platform from which they addressed the audience. Several large American flags waved from ropes tied to trees. The front and back of the monument were curtained with flags arranged on pulleys for the unveiling.)

The Chairman, Dr. Ravi-Booth, spoke as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: We are assembled on this village green to unveil a monument standing on an historic site, perhaps the most sacred spot in the State of Vermont, since here the religious, intellectual, and political life of our commonwealth had their beginnings. In order that we may more feelingly realize the solemnity of this moment, the inscription placed on the face of the monument will be read in our hearing by the Rev. William F. Frazier, Secretary of the Vermont Congregational Conference."

(See following page)

The Chairman: "The North tablet will now be unveiled by one of the most representative inhabitants of our town, Miss Katherine J. Hubbell, great-grand-daughter of Elnathan Hubbell, who came to Bennington with his family in 1763."

(Miss Hubbell, leaning on Dr. Ravi-Booth's arm, approached the monument, and drew aside the American Flag from the North tablet amidst the handclapping of the assembly.)

The Chairman: "The South tablet will now be unveiled by Deacon Samuel L. Robinson, great-great-grandson of Captain Robinson the Pioneer, who returning to his home in Massachusetts from one of the campaigns of the Continental army in the French war, passed this way, fell in love with this region, and returned with his friends, June 18, 1761, to found the town of Bennington."

(The audience warmly greeted Deacon Robinson with handclapping as he unveiled the South tablet.)

The Chairman: "Some years ago the Legislature of Vermont by special enactment charged the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Association with the responsibility of caring for all the monuments, standing or to be erected, in our historic town. Therefore it is the pleasant duty of Mrs. Elinor W. Squier and of the Church to entrust this monument to the perpetual custody of the Historical Association. The speech of presentation will now be delivered by Mr. James C. Colgate, our neighbour and friend, whose co-operation and moral support has made the accomplishment of this task infinitely easier."

Mr. Colgate spoke as follows:

Mr. Chairman—Friends and Neighbors:—

It is my pleasant duty this morning, on behalf of Mrs. Elinor W. Squier and the First Congregational Church of Bennington, to present to the Village of Old Bennington, and through it to the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Society, this monument which marks the site of the first meeting house erected in Vermont.



## FOR GOD AND FOR COUNTRY

THE FIRST PROTESTANT CHURCH WITHIN THE PRESENT LIMITS OF VERMONT WAS ORGANIZED HERE DECEMBER 3, 1762, THE SETTLERS HAVING ARRIVED JUNE 18, 1761. ON THIS SITE WAS ERRECTED IN 1763-5 THE FIRST MEETING-HOUSE IN THE NEW HAMPSHIRE GRANTS, A PLAIN BUILDING OF UNPAINTED WOOD, FIFTY FEET BY FORTY, REPLACED IN 1806 BY THE PRESENT CHURCH EDIFICE.

HERE PREACHED JEDIDIAH DEWEY, THE FIRST MINISTER OF THE CHURCH, THE TRUSTED COUNSELLOR OF THE COLONISTS. HERE THE FOREFATHERS MET IN PRAYER FOR ASSISTANCE AGAINST THE OPPRESSIVE MEASURES OF NEW YORK AND THE OVERWHELMING POWER OF KING GEORGE. HITHER THE SETTLERS RETURNED FROM THE CAPTURE OF TICONDEROGA, THE BATTLE OF BENNINGTON, THE SURRENDER OF BURGOYNE, TO OFFER UP THEIR THANKSGIVINGS, AND HERE WERE BROUGHT THE 700 PRISONERS CAPTURED ON AUGUST 16, 1777.

FOR FORTY YEARS THE CENTER OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY, THE MEETING-HOUSE WAS ALSO CONNECTED WITH THE POLITICAL LIFE OF THE STATE. VERMONT WAS AN INDEPENDENT REPUBLIC FROM JANUARY 17, 1777 TO ITS ADMISSION INTO THE UNION MARCH 4, 1791. THE FIRST LEGISLATURE MET AT WINDSOR IN 1778, AND ADJOURNED TO BENNINGTON FOR ITS JUNE SESSION, HELD ON THIS SITE. THE LAWS FOR CARRYING ON THE GOVERNMENT OF THIS SOVEREIGN STATE WERE ENACTED AT THE SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE WHICH ASSEMBLED IN THE MEETING-HOUSE, FEBRUARY 11, 1779.

HERE MET THE CONVENTION CONSISTING OF ONE DELEGATE FROM EACH TOWN, WHICH, ON JANUARY 10, 1791, RATIFIED THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES BY THE SIGNATURES OF 103 OUT OF 109 DELEGATES, THEREBY PREPARING THE WAY FOR THE ADMISSION OF VERMONT INTO THE UNION AS THE FIRST STATE AFTER THE ORIGINAL THIRTEEN.

The shaft on yonder hill commemorates the Battle of Bennington. This monument marks one of the places where the battle was won. In meeting houses such as the one erected here was born and nurtured the spirit which enabled untrained farmers to overcome highly trained and well equipped European troops.

It seems appropriate that this monument should be presented by a woman. Through the long dark pages of history runs one bright thread,—the loyalty of woman to the Christian Faith. At the Cross her foot was planted. First to greet the Risen Lord; where men have doubted she has believed; where men have wounded she has healed; where men have despaired she has hoped.

It is appropriate too that this monument should be presented by one who has but recently come into our community. We who were born here or who have lived here long, are too apt to forget or to neglect the heritage which is ours.

Truly this is holy ground where in the early days deliberations were had and plans matured which shaped the history and development, not alone of the State of Vermont, but of the great Republic of which we are a part.

As we pass this monument day by day let it remind us not alone of past glories but also of present responsibilities.

Now, as in the days of our fathers, righteousness exalteth a nation.

“Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet  
Lest we forget, lest we forget.”

The Chairman: “On behalf of the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Association, Mr. John Spargo, its President, will now deliver the speech of acceptance. This name is known not only throughout this country, but in many of the capitals of Europe.”

Mr. Spargo spoke as follows:

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

As President of the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Association, and in its name, I accept with grateful pleasure in its behalf the custody and care of this Memorial commemorating deeds and events of imperishable splendor and glory.

The Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Association, which is the custodian of all our public monuments, is a continuation of the Bennington Historical Society, which was formed in 1875 with Hiland Hall as its first President. It is interesting to recall that in 1876 that organization, in one of its earliest formal statements outlining its program, named first following the erection of the Bennington Battle Monument the proper marking of the site of the First Meeting House. From that time to the present hour of its successful culmination that object has held an important place upon the program of the Historical Society and its successor, the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Association.

It was a committee of the Historical Society which temporarily marked the site with a stake driven into the ground. This was done under the guidance and in the presence of men who remembered the old building as it was before it was taken down and removed, to be used in making a home for Anthony Haswell. Thanks to their foresight we are certain of the exact spot upon which the Meeting House stood. Under the leadership of one of my predecessors in office—Rev. Isaac Jennings, II—considerable progress was made toward the erection of a suitable memorial here, but the World War effectually checked it. When last year the Battle Monument and Historical So-





THE BENNINGTON BATTLE MONUMENT

ciety delegated Dr. Ravi-Booth, pastor of the First Church, to undertake the task of bringing about the erection of the memorial, it was felt that at last the time had arrived when this could be done. The wisdom of that decision is apparent. The result speaks for itself.

Nothing in the shape of a speech will be expected from me upon this occasion and I shall not attempt anything of the kind. The task assigned me is performed. There is one brief observation which I would crave your indulgence to make. The purpose of this memorial of marble and bronze is not simply to mark the site of a building in which great historic scenes were enacted, so that the curious wayfarer may be able to identify the precise spot. Laudable as that would be, it would hardly warrant so much effort. It is only when we conceive the marker as the outward and visible symbol of an inward, spiritual grace that it becomes worthy of this occasion and of the labor its erection has involved. It is of serious meritorious significance only in so far as it shall serve to do more than satisfy the curiosity of the mind, namely, to stimulate and foster in the hearts of successive generations a profound and reverent love for and loyalty to those ideals and institutions of ordered and equal freedom inherited from the pioneers who built the First Meeting House and laid the foundations of the Commonwealth. May reverence and love for those ideals and institutions never perish or grow dim.

Only these spiritual things are eternal. We have built the memorial of stone and bronze—materials which we regard as well nigh imperishable. Yet one tremor of Mount Anthony yonder, one convulsion of Nature, or even one bolt hurled from above by an invader riding amid the clouds, might reduce the memorial to a shapeless mass of ruin. The strongest work of our hands is but temporal. Only the things of the spirit are eternal. If we inspire each succeeding generation with strong love and loyalty for America, for American ideals and institutions, these will be secure forever; no power shall ever prevail against them, and no matter what fate betide this symbol dedicated here today, the spiritual reality shall abide and American democracy endure forever.

(At the close of Mr. Spargo's address the audience sang "America.")

My country! 'Tis of thee,  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of thee I sing;  
Land where my fathers died,  
Land of the pilgrim's pride,  
From every mountain side  
Let freedom ring.

My native country, thee,  
Land of the noble free,  
Thy name I love;  
I love thy rocks and rills,  
Thy woods and templed hills;  
My heart with rapture thrills  
Like that above.

Let music swell the breeze,  
And ring from all the trees  
Sweet freedom's song;  
Let mortal tongues awake;  
Let all that breathe partake;  
Let rocks their silence break,  
The sound prolong.

Our fathers' God, to Thee,  
Author of liberty,  
To Thee we sing:  
Long may our land be bright  
With freedom's holy light;  
Protect us by Thy might,  
Great God, our King.

The Chairman: "It had been our fond hope, entertained up to the last moment, that Dr. Isaac Jennings would have been present today to pronounce the benediction. His presence among us would have been a benediction. The name Jennings is revered

throughout this region. Isaac Jennings, the elder, was minister of this church for thirty-four years (1853-1887). During the years of his ministry, the longest in the history of the church, he walked softly before the Lord, glorifying his Maker in the service of his fellowmen. To the community he gave six stalwart sons, all of whom have been a credit to their father's name. After the lapse of many years, one of these sons was called to the pastorate of his father's church, serving it for eleven years (1905-1916). Dr. Isaac Jennings, Jr., strove with all his might to erect a suitable memorial on this site. Had it not been for the outbreak of the World War he would have succeeded. In his absence, due to ill-health, the Benediction will be pronounced by the Rev. William R. Hamlin, minister of the North Congregational Church of Bennington.

### BENEDICTION

Now, unto Him who is able to keep us from falling and present us faultless before the presence of His glory with great joy: unto the only wise God be glory and majesty, dominion and power.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit abide with us all, now and forever, Amen.

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### DESCRIPTION OF MONUMENT

The monument is a shrine standing in the center of a Maltese Cross, forty-two feet in diameter. The cross consists of one hundred and twenty marble slabs embedded in the turf.

The shrine is eleven feet seven inches high, and six feet wide. It consists of six perfect pieces of Pittsford Valley marble, weighing in the aggregate fifteen tons, and resting on a concrete foundation weighing forty tons. The monument is the work of the Vermont Marble Company.

The shrine faces the North, as did the Old Meeting-House. Upon it are attached two bronze tablets. The North Tablet is seventy-seven inches high, by forty-three inches wide, with rounded top and plain border. On the upper part appears in low relief the picture of the Old Meeting House, and underneath it the inscription reproduced on page nine. The South Tablet is a medallion, three feet in diameter, a striking reproduction of the great seal of the State of Vermont. Both tablets are the work of the T. F. McGann and Sons Co., of Boston, and are of exquisite workmanship. Underneath the seal, cut in the marble, are found the Old Testament words: "The Place Whereon Thou Standest Is Holy Ground."

The shrine, with its two bronze tablets, is the gift of Mrs. Elinor W. Squier of New York. The cost of the Maltese Cross, the grading of the village green, and the installation of the electric lights illuminating the monument at night, has been met by eighty-nine members and friends of the First Church.

Thus the cherished hope of half a century has been fulfilled.

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### PRESS COMMENT

(The articles in the various papers mentioned below are far too long to be reprinted in these pages. Only significant paragraphs from each article are quoted.)

The Boston Evening Transcript, Saturday, July 7, 1923.

A monument to commemorate the organization of the first Protestant church within the present limits of Vermont, the building of the first meeting house in the New Hampshire Grants, and the beginnings of the political life of the State will be

dedicated at Bennington tomorrow, with impressive ceremonies. The monument stands on the village green where the first meeting house in the New Hampshire Grants stood from 1763 to 1806.

The founding of the town of Bennington had its origin in the religious controversy and persecution which followed the preaching of Jonathan Edwards and the Great New England Awakening. With the feeling that the church had grown worldly and indifferent to the claims of the religion of Jesus, many of the humble members of the established church in Massachusetts and Connecticut withdrew from the church and established independent churches of their own which they called strict Congregational. These churches were never recognized by those of the older order, and in some instances their members were excommunicated. Three of these Separate churches which were located in Hardwick and Westfield, Mass., and Norwich, Conn., under the stress of persecution, decided to emigrate to the region beyond the Hoosac mountains and there establish a new town and a new church. Thus Bennington was founded, and the courageous pioneers gave to their church in the wilderness the name of the First Church of Christ in Bennington. Their first minister was Jedediah Dewey, a carpenter by trade, and under his able direction both meeting house and parsonage were erected.

Many attempts have been made during the last fifty years to place a suitable memorial on the site of the original church. To Rev. Vincent Ravi-Booth, D. D., the present pastor of the First Church, is due the credit of successfully carrying out this purpose. Through a generous gift by Mrs. Elinor W. Squier, New York, the necessary funds were provided. Dr. Ravi-Booth drew the design which was chosen by the monument committee out of seven designs which were submitted.

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The Boston Sunday Globe—July 8, 1923.

The exercises tomorrow are the culmination of a hope long entertained by members of the church versed in traditions of the locality. A former pastor, Rev. Isaac Jennings, now living in Elmira, N. Y., several years before the World War, made a strenuous effort to finance a memorial and had secured a considerable subscription fund for the project but the great conflict intervened and the plan was dropped. \* \* \*

Not only the religious but the political life of Vermont had its beginning in the first meeting house, and there is no more sacred ground in the entire State than the spot on which that building stood. Memories of its far-reaching significance are vividly recalled by the inscription on the larger tablet.

The shrine not only marks a historic site but it constitutes a centering point for a group of memorials the like of which probably has no counterpart in the entire country. To the north rises the Bennington monument, commemorating the defeat of General Baum's Hessians on August 16, 1777, a victory for the colonists that led to the collapse of General Burgoyne's expedition and considered by many writers the turning point in the Revolutionary War. Close to the larger memorial stands the gray granite pedestal topped by the heroic figure of Seth Warner, Commander of the Green Mountain Boys. On Monument Avenue, near the intersection with the main highway, the bronze panther marks the site of "Catamount Tavern," in which were held the meetings of the Council of Safety during the years that the colonists fought to retain title to their homes against the encroachment of New York. Like the original stuffed panther, mounted with bared teeth on a standard in front of the tavern, the bronze figure faces the west, the direction of the Empire State line. Directly south of the

shrine to be dedicated tomorrow may be seen the granite boulder with its tablet stating that William Lloyd Garrison, in the days of his early manhood, here edited "The Journal of the Times" and that it was in Bennington he formed his association with Benjamin Lundy of Baltimore in the cause of emancipation.

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The Bennington Evening Banner, Monday, July 9, 1923.

More than a thousand persons, a considerable number visitors and former residents, and the men with bared heads, witnessed the unveiling early Sunday afternoon of the marble shrine marking the site of the first meeting house in Vermont. In a compact circle about the memorial and the speakers' stand near the center of the village green at Old Bennington they stood in solemn reverence, an attitude of respect to the historic memories attached to the sacred spot.

Conditions for the dedication of the marble shrine, the gift of Mrs. Elinor W. Squier of New York, were ideal, June weather in its perfection, a refreshing breeze and the direct rays of the noon day sun partially broken by the close foliage of the maples.

It was an intensely interested gathering, characterized by deep emotion and reverence that during the preliminary announcements was almost oppressive. Rev. Vincent Ravi-Booth, who made the original draft of the memorial and who composed the historical inscription, presided at the stand and briefly stated the purposes of the occasion. Then came the reading of the inscription by Rev. William F. Frazier, Secretary of the Vermont Congregational Conference and of the Vermont Domestic Missionary Society.

The first relief in the tension that had held the people during the exercises came when Dr. Booth led forward Miss Katherine J. Hubbell, great-grand-daughter of El Nathan Hubbell who settled in Bennington in 1763. To Miss Hubbell had been assigned the privilege of unveiling the north tablet. As she slowly drew away the American flag there was a patter of applause, the first expression from the audience and the first lapse from the rigid tension with which it had been tightly gripped from the instant of the opening prayer at the church.

There was another touch of human and reverent interest when Deacon Samuel Robinson, oldest male member of the church and great-great-grandson of Capt. Samuel Robinson, founder of Bennington, stepped forward to unveil the south tablet, the beautiful bronze reproduction of the great seal of Vermont. There was another burst of applause, a lighting of faces and further relaxation of tension but the release was only temporary. Like the sudden releasing of a curtain the attitude of reverence returned as James C. Colgate in behalf of Mrs. Squier tersely and forcefully presented the memorial to the perpetual care of the Bennington Battle Monument and Historical Society.

The dedication Sunday is the culmination of a hope entertained by descendants of the early settlers and Bennington people interested in the glorious traditions of this historic region for nearly half a century. For a number of years the church society and the historical society have had in mind the marking of the first meeting house site.

At one time a movement was on foot to accomplish this result through contributions from the Sunday School children in the Congregational churches. With Rev. Dr. Isaac Jennings, former pastor of the Old First Church, chairman of the committee, considerable progress was made in raising subscriptions for a memorial and there is

at present in the office of Edward L. Bates, many-years secretary of the society, a plaster model of a heroic bronze, Jedidiah Dewey, "the Fighting Parson" that had tentatively been selected. \* \* \* \*

The exercises in the church were as wonderfully impressive and well carried out as those on the green. There was not one superfluous word or gesture; every sentence spoken was pregnant with meaning and there was a dignity and force to the affair seldom reached.

The audience was made up largely of descendants of the early settlers of Bennington and they were listening to the story of the foundation of a town and church that became the mother and godmother of a state. The work was done by their own ancestors and it was but natural that the interest was keen.

The program arranged by Rev. Dr. Ravi-Booth was a marvel in that it covered the grounds so well without being in the least long drawn out. Admission to the church was by ticket and every seat was taken; and it is illustrative of the intense interest of the exercises that not one person went out until the last word was spoken.

The First, the Second and the north village Congregational churches participated, and the Baptist and Methodist churches downtown held no services Sunday morning in order to give added impetus to the celebration on the hill. Rev. Vincent Ravi-Booth, D. D., pastor of the Old First Church, presided, but in order to save time made only the briefest of announcements. \* \* \* \*

The memorial is not only artistic but it aptly conforms to the purposes for which it was designed.

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The Sunday Herald, Boston, Sunday, July 8, 1923. Rotogravure Section.

*Interesting views in connection with today's Dedication of the Monument marking the site of the First Meeting House in the New Hampshire Grants.*

At Bennington, Vermont, today, the monument marking the site of the First Meeting House in the New Hampshire Grants will be dedicated with impressive ceremonies. The program will be held in the First Church. The Pastor, Dr. Vincent Ravi-Booth, who designed the monument and wrote the inscription, will preside over the program. Many distinguished guests will attend the ceremonies. The monument consists of an arched shrine, 12 feet high and 6 feet wide, on which are placed two bronze tablets.

At the left—The Garrison Marker. It is inscribed as follows: "Fifty Feet West of This Spot William Lloyd Garrison Edited The Journal of the Times, October 3, 1828-March 27, 1829. Hither Came Benjamin Lundy, December 6, 1828, to Enlist Him in the Cause of the Slave. Garrison Departed Hence to Lift Up, in Baltimore, the Banner of Immediate Emancipation."

Upper Centre—The present structure of the First Church which superseded the Old Meeting House in 1806. It is one of the most beautiful examples of colonial Ecclesiastical architecture in New England.

Lower Centre—The two bronze tablets of the First Meeting House monument. On the large tablet is seen in low relief the building commemorated by the monument. The medallion is a reproduction in bronze, three feet in diameter, of the great seal of the State of Vermont. It is held by the Pastor.

Upper Right—The monument marking the site of the First Meeting House in the New Hampshire Grants. It is a gift to the First Church from Mrs. Elinor W. Squier of New York.

Lower Left—The Bennington Battle Monument erected in 1891 by the States of Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire and the Federal Government to commemorate the decisive American victory over the British troops, August 16, 1777. It is said to be the highest battle monument in the world, being 301 feet ten and one-half inches to the top of the cap stone.

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The Congregationalist, Boston, July 12, 1923.

Memorial to Historic Bennington Church.

A memorial monument to the First Church of Bennington, Vt., was dedicated with impressive ceremonies on Sunday, July 8. The monument stands on the village green where from 1763 to 1806 stood the First Meeting House in the New Hampshire Grants.

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The first building was replaced in 1806 by the present edifice, a beautiful colonial structure. The first meeting house stood between two highways. After its removal, the site, with adjacent ground, was set aside as the village green. In the center of this green stands the monument. During the last half century repeated attempts have been made to erect a suitable memorial on this site. To the present pastor of First Church, Dr. Vincent Ravi-Booth, is due the credit of successfully carrying out this purpose. The necessary funds for the monument were given by Mrs. Elinor Squier of New York. \* \* \* \*

Not only was the first meeting house the home of the first church in the New Hampshire Grants, but the first day school, the first institution for higher learning, Clio Hall, and the first state legislature in Vermont were organized under its roof. Thus the religious, intellectual and political life of Vermont is closely associated with this sacred spot. \* \* \* \*

The Vermont Congregational Conference was represented by the following official delegates: Former Governor James Hartness of Springfield, Hon. G. L. Dunham of Brattleboro, Judge F. L. Fish of Vergennes, Judge J. L. Hoadley of Rutland and Secretary W. F. Frazier of Burlington. The churches of the Bennington, Rutland and Windham Associations were represented by pastors and delegates.

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The Associated Press on July 9th released an account of the dedication of this monument which was generally copied by the press of the country. Word has been received from several cities in the middle and far west, expressing interest in the erection of the monument and in the dedicatory exercises.



## AUTHORITIES

For Professor Lewis D. Stilwell's Address on "Bennington's Part In Vermont's Independence."

- (1) N. B. Hall in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:164.
- (2) E. S. Ishams' address *Ethan Allen* in Vermont Historical Society proceedings 1898, pg. 83.
- (3) July 20, 1764.
- (4) The New York authorities had sold almost every acre on which improvements had been made in Bennington County, before the settlers received notice of any claim against their titles. H. C. Benton: The Vermont settlers and New York Land Speculators pg. 80-1.
- (5) Ira Allen: History of Vermont in Vermont Historical Society Collections. 1:34.
- (6) N. B. Hall In Vermont Historical Gazette 1:146.
- (7) Robinson did obtain an order (1767) directing the New York Governor to make no new grants of lands which had already been granted by New Hampshire. But this was practically ignored by Lieutenant Governor Colden. See H. W. DePuy: Ethan Allen pp. 127-8, 145-6.
- (8) Ira Allen: History of Vermont in Vermont Historical Society Collections 1:344.
- (9) A letter of John Munro to Governor Tryon quoted in DePuy: Ethan Allen p. 156.
- (10) Vermont Historical Society Collections 1:6.
- (11) Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:162.
- (12) Ira Allen: History of Vermont in Vermont Historical Society Collections 1:346.
- (13) April 15, 1774. Vermont Historical Gazetteer 111:582-5.
- (14) L. E. Chittenden: The Capture of Ticonderoga P. 27-28, quoting Ethan Allen: Vindication of the opposition of the inhabitants of Vermont.
- (15) D. P. Thompson: Ira Allen in Vermont Historical Society Proceedings 1908-1909 p. 121.
- (16) Ethan Allen, Commandant, Captains Warner and Herrick. N. B. Hall in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:154.
- (17) Dispatch of Lieutenant-Governor Colden to Lord Dartmouth, quoted in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:154.
- (18) H. W. DePuy: Ethan Allen p. 328.
- (19) Lafayette Wilbur Early History of Vermont 1:103-4.
- (20) N. B. Hall in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:156.
- (21) Ira Allen in his History of Vermont says 750 "were safely lodged in the meeting-house." Vermont Historical Society Collections 1:333-389.
- (22) E. M. W. Lovejoy: History of Royalton, p. 108.
- (23) Ira Allen: History of Vermont in Vermont Historical Society Collections 1:393.
- (24) Dates given by N. B. Hall in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:138.
- (25) L. H. Meader: The Council of Censors in Vermont Historical Society proceedings, 1898, p. 113.
- (26) Ira Allen: History of Vermont in Vermont Historical Collections 1:405, 418, 419, 457.
- (27) Ibid., 418.
- (28) Ira Allen: History of Vermont in Vermont Historical Society Collections 1:415-416, 423-425, 433.
434. Ira Allen was the chief negotiator.
- (29) Ibid 426-428.
- (30) See Lafayette Wilbur: Early History of Vermont 1:195.
- (31) E. P. Walton's Address: Nathaniel Chipman in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 111:1158.
- (32) Hiland Hall in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:138. The census of 1791 gave 2377.
- (33) W. H. Crockett: History of Vermont 11:359.
- (34) See Timothy Dwight's eulogy of the soil of Bennington—"yields everything gratifying to the wishes of the farmer." Travels (1821) 11:402.
- (35) History of Vermont in Vermont Historical Society Collections 1:335.
- (36) Ibid 1:337.
- (37) Samuel Williams: Natural and Civil History of Vermont (1809) 1:64.
- (38) See W. T. Nicholls: Eulogy of Silas Bowen, M. D. (Rutland, 1858). P. 7.
- (39) See Zadock Thompson's list of epidemics in History of Vermont (1842) part 11, 220-222. An account of the small-pox in Bennington is given in Vermont Historical Gazetteer 1:180.
- (40) Timothy Dwight: Travels (1821) 11:468.
- (41) J. E. Goodrich: Immigration to Vermont in Vermont Historical Society Proceedings 1908-1909. P. 70.

